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JP DELLACAMERA: "INFORM, EDUCATE & ENTERTAIN"

JONAH FONTELA - OCTOBER 15 2018

Broadcasting isn't shooting the breeze at your local bar. Commentary is not casual. Or passive. Just ask JP Dellacamera, an iconic voice of American soccer who's spent the last 30 years preparing detailed gameday charts, knowing when to amp up the energy in his voice in accordance with events on the field and, crucially, when to let the game action speak for itself. "It's about three things: to inform, educate and entertain," he offered after winning the 2018 Colin Jose Media Award and earning a place in the



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commentary for some of the most seminal moments of the American game, Dellacamera's first flashes of soccer came through a television set. "I had a fascination with watching whatever limited soccer there was on TV at the time – *Soccer Made in Germany* and the explosion of the North American Soccer League [NASL] later and the arrival of Pele."

Dellacamera went into Boston to watch the old Shamrock Rovers, who played a year (1967) in the old United Soccer Association League and the Boston Beacons who lasted about the same amount of time (1968) before the Minutemen and Tea Men went on to live slightly longer lives. But it wasn't the sunshine and green grass of Fenway Park – transformed for soccer gamedays back then – that brought the aspiring broadcaster his earliest professional work. "My first experiences broadcasting soccer was indoor. It all started there," said Dellacamera, who went on to call nine consecutive FIFA World Cups on TV or radio, and five Women's World Cups. "Outdoor [soccer] wasn't that popular in the early 80s. Indoor was the place, in those years, to satisfy the soccer urge."

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JP the legend!

Congratulations to our very own JP Dellacamera on his induction to the National Soccer Hall of Fame next weekend. 🌟🌟🌟

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535



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hockey and soccer in that peculiarly American hybrid game, complete with dasher boards and penalty boxes. "People forget that indoor soccer thrived at one point and you had 19 thousand people coming out for some of those franchises," he said of a time when the Steamers often outdrew their local NBA and NHL counterparts.

When the indoor craze passed, outdoor soccer in America was a wave about to crest. The critical date was November 19, 1989. The venue: Hasely Crawford Stadium in Port of Spain, Trinidad. The U.S. Men needed a win to qualify for their first World Cup in 40 years. What came next was the so-called 'Shot Heard 'Round the World' – Paul Caligiuri's long-range dipper that sent the Americans back to the Cup after 40 years in the wilderness. "I like to think of it as the billion-dollar goal because if you track everything that's come from that goal it was easily worth that amount," said Dellacamera, now 66, who remembers having to go to the stadium that day hours early for fear that even those with media accreditation would have trouble getting in. "There were bogus tickets and we were told they were going to stop letting people in at some point. The day before the game, I went around the city and people had painted their houses red and their cars red. In the stadium, everything was red except for two rows of American fans in white."

It's as iconic a moment as exists in American soccer. It paved the way for the U.S. hosting the World Cup in 1994 and the birth of MLS in 1996. And Dellacamera's staccato call of the goal was understated, a lesson he learned from boyhood non-soccer idols of the broadcast booth like Bob Costas, Al Michaels and, especially, Brent Musburger.

Ramos. Putting it in. To Caligiuri. Beats the first man. A left footed shot. Paul Caligiuri has scored a goal and the USA lead one nothing...

There's another memory Dellacamara can't shake – a highlight in a professional life highlighting highs and lows and moments of great drama. It was the 1999 Women's World Cup Final in Pasadena.

Goal!

It's the only word he says after Brandi Chastain's rocket of a penalty kick hit the side netting. Dellacamera let the rising scream of the crowd accompany the rest of the American team racing toward Chastain, on her knees in her sports bra having ripped her jersey off. More than two minutes passed before he picked the commentary back up. History needs no adornment, the commentator knew. The sound, the picture and the moment told the whole story.



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history but all of soccer history. It started a wave."



Never Done Learning

Dellacamara doesn't sit on his reputation. He's rigorous. He puts in the work. "I learn all the time," said the veteran broadcaster, who joins the likes of soccer thinkers, custodians, historians and provocateurs like Paul Gardner, the Treckers (Jim and Jerry) and George Vecsey as Colin Jose Media Award winners. "That's why I've lasted so long. I take nothing for granted. I study as much today as I did in the beginning – if not more. If I thought to myself – *wow, I really nailed that* – what would be the point of continuing? You can always learn new tricks and you change through the years."

There's an awkwardness to the watcher being watched – the commentator being commentated upon. But while players like Brad Friedel, Tiffeny Milbrett and Cindy Parlow Cone go into the Hall of Fame as the 2018 induction class, Dellacamara will go in right with them. His contributions, his crisp soundtrack to some of American Soccer's indelible moments, will get the recognition they deserve. "It's hard to find the words for what this means," said the man whose job it is, and has been for three decades, to find the right words. "To be there with the class of people being inducted this year makes it so special."

While more than a fan – just another man in a barroom with an opinion, an interest and a voice – Dellacamara is a fan too. He loves the game in a humble way. "The game is so special to me and has give me so manv moments that will live on forever through



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